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ESCAPE

THE WORKS OF
JOHN GALSWORTHY

NOVELS

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THE MAN OF PROPERTY
THE COUNTRY HOUSE
FRATERNITY
THE PATRICIAN
THE DARK FLOWER
THE FREELANDS
BEYOND
FIVE TALES
SAINTS' PROGRESS
IN CHANCERY
TO LET
THE WHITE MONKEY
THE SILVER SPOON

THE FORSYTE SAGA
CARAVAN

STORIES AND STUDIES

A COMMENTARY
A MOTLEY
THE INN OF TRANQUILLITY
THE LITTLE MAN
A SHEAF
ANOTHER SHEAF
TATTERDEMALION
CAPTURES

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SIX SHORT PLAYS:	THE FIRST AND THE LAST
	THE LITTLE MAN
	HALL-MARKED
	DEFEAT
	THE SUN
	PUNCH AND GO

ESCAPE

AN EPISODIC PLAY
IN A
PROLOGUE AND TWO PARTS

BY

JOHN GALSWORTHY

DUCKWORTH
3 HENRIETTA STREET, LONDON, W.C.2

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CHARACTERS OF THE PLAY

MATT DENANT
THE GIRL OF THE TOWN
THE PLAIN CLOTHES MAN
THE TWO POLICEMEN
THE FELLOW CONVICT
THE TWO WARDERS
THE SHINGLED LADY
THE MAID
THE OLD GENTLEMAN
THE FOUR TRIPPERS
THE MAN IN PLUS FOURS AND HIS WIFE
THE VILLAGE CONSTABLE
THE TWO LABOURERS
THE FARMER
THE LITTLE GIRL
THE TWO MAIDEN LADIES
THE PARSON
THE BELLRINGER
THE HUE AND CRY

PROLOGUE.

Hyde Park at night. More than a year passes.

PART I.

EPISODE I. Dartmoor in a fog (day). Six hours pass.

EPISODE II. Dartmoor in a fog (night). Thirty-two hours pass.

EPISODE III. Bedroom in an Inn. Seven hours pass.

PART II.

EPISODE IV. Open space by the River. An hour passes.

EPISODE V. Open space on the Moor. Half an hour passes.

EPISODE VI. Another open space on the Moor. An hour passes.

EPISODE VII. Gravel Pit on the Moor. A few minutes pass.

EPISODE VIII. Parlour in a Cottage of Gentility. No time passes.

EPISODE IX. Vestry of a Village Church.

PROLOGUE

PROLOGUE

Hyde Park at night. Summer. The Row with its iron railing, footwalk, seats, trees and bushes behind. A WOMAN, *or* GIRL (*you can't tell*), *is sitting alone, in dim radiance from lamps unseen to Right and Left. Her painted mask is not unattractive, her attitude slack and uneasy.* A PLAIN CLOTHES MAN *passes Right to Left, glances at her inviting him and increases his pace. By the expression on her face as he approaches and recedes, it is easy for him to see what she is.* TWO PEOPLE *pass without glancing at her at all—they are talking of what "he said to me" and "I said to him." Then nobody passes, and, powdering her nose, she seems preparing to shift along, when from the Left,* MATT DENANT *appears strolling. He is a young man, tallish and athletic, dressed as if he has been racing in hot weather; he has a pair of race glasses and a cigar. The* GIRL *shifts forward on her seat as he approaches. He is going by when she looks suddenly up and says in a low voice: "Good evening!" He halts, looks at her, gives a little shrug, carries his hand to his hat, and answering, "Good evening!" is moving on when she speaks again.*

GIRL. Have you a match ? [*She is holding out a cigarette; he stops and hands her his cigarette lighter.*]

GIRL. [*Fingering the lighter*] Gold ?

MATT. Brass.

GIRL. Have one ? [*Offering her cigarette case.*]

MATT. Thanks, I'm smoking. [*He shows her his cigar; resting his foot on the seat and dangling his race glasses.*]

GIRL. Been racing ?

MATT. Goodwood.

GIRL. I went to see the Jubilee this year.

MATT. And what did you back ?

GIRL. Everything that didn't win. It's rotten when you don't back winners.

MATT. Don't you like the horses ?

GIRL. They look pretty.

MATT. Prettiest things in the world.

GIRL. Pretty as women ?

MATT. Saving your presence.

GIRL. Do you mean that ?

MATT. Well, you get a woman once in a way that can arch her neck.

GIRL. You don't like women—that's clear.

MATT. Not too much.

GIRL. [*Smiling*] You speak your mind, anyway.

MATT. If you ask me, they've got such a lot of vice about 'em compared with horses.

GIRL. And who puts vice into them ?

MATT. I know—you all say men, but d'you believe it ?

GIRL. [*With a laugh*] Well, I don't know. Don't men put vice into horses ?

MATT. [*Struck*] M'yes ! [*Sitting down*] All the same, there's nothing wilder than a wild horse—I've seen 'em out West.

GIRL. There's nothing *so* wild as a wild woman.

A momentary silence while they stare at each other.

MATT. Women haven't the excuse of horses—they've been tame since Eve gave Adam his tea.

GIRL. Um ! Garden of Eden ! Must have been something like Hyde Park—there was a prize cop there, anyway.

MATT. D'you come here often ?

GIRL. [*Nodding*] Where else *can* one go ? They're so particular now.

MATT. They do seem to keep you on the run.

GIRL. What are you—soldier ?

MATT. Once upon a time.

GIRL. What now ?

MATT. Thinking of being a parson.

GIRL. [*Laughs*] You've got money of your own, then ?

MATT. A little.

GIRL. [*With a sigh*] If I had money of my own, d'you know what I'd do ?

MATT. Get rid of it.

GIRL. Just what I wouldn't. If ever I got myself dependent on you men again, [*Very grimly*] shut my lights off.

MATT. Not like the lady under laughing gas.

GIRL. What was the matter with her ?

MATT. Kept shouting, "I don't want to be a free, independent, economic agent ! I want to be loved."

GIRL. She was wrong—No, *Sir* ! Get my head under a second time ? Not much ! But we can't save—don't make enough. So there you are ! It's a good bit worse than it used to be, they say——

MATT. The ordinary girl more free and easy now, you mean ?

GIRL. [*Grimly*] The *ordinary* girl ?

MATT. Well, you don't call yourself ordinary, do you ?

The GIRL *sits quite still and doesn't answer.*

MATT. Sorry ! Didn't mean to hurt you.

GIRL. Give me the fellow that does : he doesn't hurt half so much. But you're quite right. [*Bitterly*] There isn't much excuse for us, now.

MATT. Aren't we getting a bit solemn ?

GIRL. The gay girl—eh ? They say you get used to anything : but I'll tell you—you never get used to playing the canary when you don't feel like it.

MATT. Ah ! I always sympathised with canaries—expected to sing, and so permanently yellow.

GIRL. It was nice of you to sit down and talk.

MATT. Thanks ; it's all secondary education.

She slides her hand along to his, with a card.

GIRL. Here's my address ; you might come and see me now and then.

MATT. [*Twiddling the card—amused and embarrassed*] *On verra !*

GIRL. What's that ?

MATT. It's an expression of hope.

GIRL. [*Mouth opening*] Ow ! How about now ?

MATT. Thanks—afraid not—due somewhere at ten.

GIRL. Another ?

MATT. No.

GIRL. You don't like me, I believe.

MATT. [*With a shrug*] Oh ! Don't say that. You're original.

GIRL. Original sin.

MATT. There are worse things, I guess.

GIRL. You bet ! There's modest worth. If *that* isn't worse ! Not that this is a pretty life. It's just about as rotten as it can be.

MATT. How did you get into it ?

GIRL. Cut it out ! You all ask that, and you can take it from me you never get told. Well ! I belong to the oldest profession in the world ! That isn't true, either—there's an older.

MATT. Not really.

GIRL. The cop's. Mine wouldn't ever have been a profession but for them.

MATT. Good for you !

GIRL. It isn't good for me. Look in at Bow Street on Monday morning.

MATT. To see 'em shoot the sitting pheasant ?—no, thanks. The Law isn't exactly sporting. Can't be, I suppose, if it's got to keep the course clear.

GIRL. They might wait till one makes oneself a nuisance.

MATT. Ever been run in ?

GIRL. [*With a look, and a decision*] Um ! Not yet ! [*Suddenly*] What can we do ? If we don't make a sign, who's to know us ?

MATT. That's delightful.

GIRL. Clean streets !—that's the cry. Clean men ! That'd be better !

MATT. And then where'd you be ?

GIRL. [*Passionately*] Not here !

MATT. [*After staring at her*] Um ! The kettle and the pot. What ! Give me horses and dogs, all the time.

GIRL. I've got a cat.

MATT. Persian ?

GIRL. [*Nodding*] A real beauty. [*Suddenly*] Wouldn't you like to come and see him ?

He shakes his head, rises, takes his glasses, and holds out his hand. She is going to take it—then draws her hand back sharply, frowning and biting her lips. He gives a shrug, salutes, and moves on. She catches at his sleeve, misses it, sits a second, then rises and follows. Unseen by her, the PLAIN CLOTHES MAN *has reappeared, Left. He moves swiftly and grasps her arm just as she is vanishing Right. The* GIRL *gives a little squeal as he draws her back towards the seat. She resists.*

GIRL. Who are *you* ?

PLAIN CLOTHES MAN. Plain clothes. [*And, as she still resists, he tries to calm her by a slight twist of the arm.*]

GIRL. You brute—you brute!

PLAIN CLOTHES MAN. Now then—quietly, and you won't get hurt.

GIRL. I wasn't doing anything.

PLAIN CLOTHES MAN. Oh! no, of course not.

GIRL. [*Looking after* MATT] I wasn't, I tell you; and he'll tell you so too!

MATT *has reappeared, Right.*

Won't you? You talked to me of your own accord?

MATT. I did. Who may you be?

PLAIN CLOTHES MAN. [*Showing his card*] This woman accosted you. I've observed her carefully, and not for the first time.

MATT. Well, you've made a blooming error. We had a chat, that's all.

PLAIN CLOTHES MAN. I saw her accost you. I saw her try to detain you—and I've seen her do it before now.

MATT. I don't care what you've seen before now—you can't arrest her for that. You didn't see it this time.

PLAIN CLOTHES MAN. [*Still holding the* GIRL *and looking at* MATT *steadily*] You know perfectly well the woman accosted you—and you'd better keep out of this.

MATT. Let the girl go, then. You're exceeding your duty.

PLAIN CLOTHES MAN. What do you know about my duty? It's my duty to keep the park decent, man or woman. Now then, are you going to clear off?

MATT. No, I'm going to stay on.

PLAIN CLOTHES MAN. All right then, you can follow us to the station.

MATT. Mayn't two people talk! I've made no complaint.

PLAIN CLOTHES MAN. I know this woman, I tell you. Don't interfere with me, or I shall want you too.

MATT. You can have me if you let the girl go.

PLAIN CLOTHES MAN. Now look here, I'm being very patient. But if you don't stop hindering me in the execution of my duty, I'll summon assistance and you'll *both* go to the station.

MATT. Don't lose your hair—I tell you, on my honour, this lady did not annoy me in the least. On the contrary——

PLAIN CLOTHES MAN. She was carrying on her profession here, as she's done before; my orders are to prevent that, and she's going to be charged. This is the third night I've watched her.

GIRL. I've never seen your face before.

PLAIN CLOTHES MAN. No, but I've seen yours—I've given you plenty of rope. That's enough, now—[*He puts his whistle in his mouth.*]

MATT. It's a rotten shame! Drop that girl's arm!

He lays his hand on the PLAIN CLOTHES MAN'S *arm. The* PLAIN CLOTHES MAN *blows his whistle, drops the* GIRL'S *arm and seizes* MATT.

MATT. [*Breaking from him; to the* GIRL] Run for it!

GIRL. Oh! no—don't fight! The police have got it on you all the time. I'll go with him.

MATT. [*With fists up, keeping the* PLAIN CLOTHES MAN *at arm's length*] Run, I tell you. He'll have his work cut out with me.

But the PLAIN CLOTHES MAN *is spryer than he thinks, runs in and catches him round the body.*

GIRL. Oh! Oh!

MATT. No, you don't!

In the violent struggle the PLAIN CLOTHES MAN'S *bowler hat falls off.* MATT *emerges at arm's length again, squaring up.*

MATT. Come on, then, if you will have it!

The PLAIN CLOTHES MAN *rushes in. He gets* MATT'S *right straight from the shoulder on the point of the jaw, topples back, and goes down like a log.*

GIRL. Oh! Oh!

MATT. Run, you little idiot; run!

GIRL. [*Aghast*] Oh! he hit his head—on the rail! I heard the crack. See, he don't move!

MATT. Well, of course. I knocked him out. [*He goes a step nearer, looking down*] The rail—did he——?

GIRL. [*Kneeling and feeling the* PLAIN CLOTHES MAN'S *head*] Feel!

MATT. My God! That was a wump. I say!

GIRL. I told you not to fight. What did you want to fight for?

MATT. [*Pulling open the* PLAIN CLOTHES MAN'S *coat, and diving for his heart*] I can't feel it. Curse!

Now we can't leave him. [*Feeling for the heart*] Good God!

GIRL. [*Bending and snatching at his arm*] Quick! Before anybody comes. Across the grass back there. Who'd know?

MATT. [*Listening*] I can't leave the poor devil like this. [*Looking round*] Take his hat; go and get some water in it from the Serpentine.

The GIRL *picks up the hat and stands undecided.*

GIRL [*Agonised*] No, no! Come away! It's awful, this! Suppose—suppose he's dead!

She pulls at him.

MATT. [*Shaking her off*] Don't be a little fool! Go and get some water. Go on!

The GIRL *wrings her hands, then turns and runs off Left, with the hat.* MATT *continues to kneel, rubbing the* PLAIN CLOTHES MAN'S *temples, feeling his pulse, listening at his heart.*

MATT. I don't see how it's possible! [*With a gesture of despair he resumes his efforts to revive the body. Suddenly he looks up.*]

TWO POLICEMEN *have come from the Right.*

POLICEMAN. What's this?

MATT. I don't know. I'm a little afraid he——

POLICEMAN. What! Who is he? [*Looking at the face*] Phew! One of ours! [*Bending, kneeling, putting the back of his hand to the mouth*] Not a breath! How did this happen?

MATT. [*Pointing to the rail*] He knocked his head on that.

POLICEMAN. Where's his hat ?

MATT. It fell off. Some one's gone to get water in it.

POLICEMAN. Who ?

MATT. A girl——

POLICEMAN. He blew his whistle. Did you hit him ?

MATT. There was a row. He seized me. I smote him on the jaw. He fell back and hit his head on the rail.

POLICEMAN. What was the row about ?

MATT. [*Putting his hands to his head*] Oh ! God knows ! Original sin.

POLICEMAN. [*To the other* POLICEMAN] Mate, stay with him. I'll get an ambulance. [*To* MATT] And you—come with me !

The CURTAIN *falls*

PART I

PART I

EPISODE I

More than a year has passed. On the prison farm, Dartmoor, in a heavy fog. The stone wall of the field runs along the back (on the back-cloth) and a stone wall joins it on the Left. MATT DENANT *and a fellow convict are picking up the potatoes they have dug up earlier. They are but dimly seen in the fog, flinging the potatoes right and left into two baskets between them. They are speaking in low voices.*

MATT. The poor blighter was dead, and I got five years for manslaughter.

FELLOW CONVICT. Cripes! A cop! You were lucky not to swing, mate.

MATT. The girl stood by me like a brick. If she hadn't come forward——

FELLOW CONVICT. Lucky there, too. Most of 'em wouldn't. They're too mortal scared. 'Ow much you got left to do?

MATT. Three years, if I behave like a plaster saint. [*He stops and straightens himself.*]

FELLOW CONVICT. I got four. I say, you're a torf, yn't you?

MATT. Toff! [*With a laugh*] Item, one Oxford

accent; item, one objection to being spoken to like a dog.

FELLOW CONVICT. Hush! [*Jerking his thumb towards the wall, Right*] Fog don't prevent 'em hearin', blight 'em!

MATT. It's come up mighty sudden. Think it's going to last?

FELLOW CONVICT. After a wet spell—this time o' year, when the wind's gone—yus. They'll be roundin' us up in a minute, you'll see—and 'ome to Blighty. Makes 'em nervous—fog. That's when you get the escapes.

MATT. No one's ever got away from here, they say.

FELLOW CONVICT. There've been a good few tries, though.

MATT. Gosh! I'd like to have one.

FELLOW CONVICT. Don't you do it, mate. You want clothes, you want money, you want a car, to give you a dawg's chance. And then they'd get you. This moor's the 'ell of a place. I say, you must 'ave hit that cop a fair knock!

MATT. Just an ordinary knock-out on the jaw. It wasn't that. He landed the back of his head on the Row rail. [*He resumes potato picking*] Poor devil! He wasn't married, luckily.

FELLOW CONVICT. Luckily? Well, you never know about *that*. But get 'im off your chest, mate —'e wouldn't sit on mine—no more than an 'Un did in the War. That's a good fair potato. [*Holding one up.*]

The figure of a WARDER *is dimly seen coming*

along from the Right under the wall. He stops.

WARDER. No talking there! When you've finished that row, pick back the next and then stand by to fall in. [*No answer from the* CONVICTS.] Hear me? Answer, can't you?

FELLOW CONVICT. Right, Sir!

The WARDER'S *figure is seen moving back.*

Nice man, ain't he? Wot'd I tell you? Early 'ome to tea.

MATT. [*Very low*] Like a dog! Three more years—like a dog!

FELLOW CONVICT. 'E's all right, reely. It's the fog. Fog makes 'em nervous; an' when a man's nervous I've always noticed 'e speaks like that.

MATT. Yes; well, *I* can't get used to it.

FELLOW CONVICT. Too particular, you torfs—get too much corn when you're two-year-olds.

MATT. [*Sharp and low*] *You* know the moor—where's Two Bridges?

FELLOW CONVICT. There—a mile.

MATT. And Tavistock?

FELLOW CONVICT. [*Pointing right back*] Seven. Guv'nor—don't do it. There ain't a chance in a million. You'll only get pneumonium in this stinkin' wet, and they'll have you into the bargain, sure as eggs—bread and water, cells, and the rest of it.

MATT. I got out of Germany.

FELLOW CONVICT. Out of Germany? Cripes! That was none so dusty!

MATT. They've got no dogs here now, have they ?

FELLOW CONVICT. Don't fancy they 'ave. But, Guv'nor, the whole countryside round 'ere's agynst you. They don't like convicts. Funny, yn't it ?

They have reached the end of the row, Left, and stop, stooping, with their heads close together.

MATT. Draw me a plan with this stick.

FELLOW CONVICT. Blimy ! [*Marking the earth*] 'Ere's the main road, and 'ere's the cross road to Tavistock. 'Ere's the Inn at Two Bridges, and 'ere's Post Bridge. 'Ere's Bee Tor Cross, ten to twelve mile. Chagford up there, Moreton 'ampstead 'ere.

MATT. What's across the main road from Two Bridges ?

FELLOW CONVICT. Moor. A long bit o' wood about 'ere ; then 'Ambledon ; then you drops into fields to Widecombe ; then up, and more moor to Heytor and Bovey. [*Pronounce* BUVVY.] There's rail at Bovey or Lustleigh, or Moreton or Tavistock, and much good that'll do you with everybody as eager to see you as if you was the Prince of Wyles ! Out this way you got Fox Tor Mire—ruddy bad bog, that !

A moment's silence while MATT *studies the chart in the soil.*

WARDER'S VOICE. [*Off*] Hurry up with that last row—you two men ! *The fog grows thicker.*

MATT. [*Smearing out the chart with his foot*] It's real thick now. Gosh ! I'll have a shot !

They move back, Right, beginning the last row.

FELLOW CONVICT. [*Jerking his thumb Left*] There's

another blighter thirty yards out on the wall there. 'E'll shoot.

MATT. I know. I'm going over that wall in the corner, and then along under his nose on the near side. Ten to one he'll be looking out on the off side in this fog. If that chap there [*Jerking his head, Right*] doesn't spot me, I'll get by.

FELLOW CONVICT. You're mad, Guv'nor. They'll shoot at sight. And if they don' see you—in ten minutes I'll have finished this row, an' they're bound to know you're gone. You 'aven't the chance of a cock-louse.

MATT. All right, friend, don't worry! A bullet'd be a nice change for me. If I don't get one—I'll give 'em a run for their money.

FELLOW CONVICT. Well, if you must go, mate—Strike the main road and run that way. [*Pointing*] In this fog they'll 'ave to take us back before they dare start after you. You'll find a scrap of a wood a bit beyond the river on the left side. Get into it and cover yourself with leaves till it's dead dark. Then you'll still be close to the road and you can myke shift in a stack or something till the morning. If you go wandering about the moor all night in this fog, you won't get nowhere, and you'll be done in stiff before dawn.

MATT. Thanks. Sooner the better, now — Never stop to look at a fence. Next time the steam's full on. [*Puts some potatoes in his pocket*] *Pommes crus —sauce Dartmoor.* Can one eat these raw? I ate turnips in Germany.

FELLOW CONVICT. Never tried, Guv'nor. Tyke this. [*He holds out a slice of bread.*]

MATT. Thanks awfully. You're a good chap.

FELLOW CONVICT. Wish you luck. Wish I was comin' too, but I 'aven't got the pluck, an' that's a fact.

MATT. Now! Turn your head the other way and keep it there. Remember me to Blighty. So long!

He moves three steps away from his fellow convict, pauses a few seconds, then suddenly, stooping low, runs to the wall, Left, and is over it like a cat. In the minute of silence that follows, one can see the CONVICT *listening.*

FELLOW CONVICT. [*Counting the seconds to himself, up to twenty, in an excited murmur*] Gawd! 'E's past that blighter! [*Listens again*] Gawd! 'E's orf! [*With realisation of his fellow's escape comes an itch to attempt it himself*] Shall I 'ave a shoot meself? Shall I? Gawd! I must!

He has just turned to sneak off, when the WARDER'S *voice is heard off, Right.*

WARDER. You, man, there! Where's your mate?

FELLOW CONVICT. 'Ad a call, Sir. [*He stands still.*]

VOICE OF WARDER. [*Nearing*] What d'you mean?

FELLOW CONVICT. Went over to that wall, Sir.

WARDER. [*Appearing*] He's not there. Now then! Where is he?

FELLOW CONVICT. No use arstin' me. *I* don' know where he is.

WARDER. Come with me. [*He marches sharply along the wall back, towards the Left. Halting*] Convict! Out there! Answer! Warder! You, Williams! Anyone passed you? Lost a man here!

VOICE OF SECOND WARDER. No one's passed.

FIRST WARDER. Sharp, then! There's a man gone!

SECOND WARDER *appears on the top of the wall.*

SECOND WARDER. He must ha' got past *you*, then.

FIRST WARDER. Curse this fog! Fire a shot for warning. No, don't, or we'll have others running for it. Muster sharp and get off home and report—that's the only thing. [*To* CONVICT] Here, you! Keep your mouth shut. You know all about it, I bet.

FELLOW CONVICT. Not me, Sir. 'E just said 'e 'ad a call to 'ave tea with the Duchess; an' I went on pickin' up, knowin' you was in an 'urry.

FIRST WARDER. Mind your lip! Come on, Williams. March, you!

They are marching, Right, as

The CURTAIN *falls*

EPISODE II

Seven hours have passed. The moor in the dark and the fog, close to the main road. Nothing visible.

VOICE OF FIRST WARDER. What the hell's the use of picketing this blighted road—you can see nothing!

VOICE OF SECOND WARDER. I've seen two cops made just here. When a man's out on a night like this, it's human nature to cling to the road.

FIRST WARDER. But he may be anywhere.

SECOND WARDER. If he's travelling at all, he's on a road. You can't make it on the moor in fog as thick as this.

FIRST WARDER. He may have headed for Cornworthy.

SECOND WARDER. They never go that way—too afraid of Fox Tor Mire.

FIRST WARDER. Or Tavistock?

SECOND WARDER. Well, that road's picketed all right.

FIRST WARDER. I'd flog for escapes. They never think of us—out after these blighters nights like this. It's too bad, you know. Got a drain of the stuff?

SECOND WARDER. Here you are. Put it to your mouth by the smell.

First Warder. If I get this cove, I'll let him know it. 'Tisn't in nature not to feel murderous towards a chap that keeps you out all night in this sort o' muck! [*He drinks.*]

Second Warder. Leave some for me, mate. [*In a whisper*] What was that? Hark! [*They listen.*]

First Warder. Don't 'ear nothing. [*He is about to put the flask to his mouth again.*]

Second Warder. Thought I heard a scraping noise. Shall I show a glim?

First Warder. Better not! [*They listen.*]

Second Warder. There's ponies round here.

First Warder. This fellow was a toff.

Second Warder. Um! Captain in the War.

First Warder. Him that killed the 'tec in Hyde Park. He's a sporty beggar. Got blood in him. That's the worst sort when it comes to an escape—they run till they drop.

Second Warder. Man of education—might have had more sense than to run for it. He must know he can't get off.

First Warder. There's a spirit in some of these higher class chaps you can't break. D'you know that lawyer in the left wing—embezzlement? That chap gives me the creeps. He's got the self-possession of an image.

Second Warder. I'm sorry for some of these fellows, but I'm damned if I'm ever sorry for a gentleman. They ought to know better than to get themselves here. And, as you say, they've got the devil's brass.

First Warder. Still—up on the ladder and down with a whump—it hits 'em harder than it does the others.

Second Warder. [*Yawning*] Wish I was in bed! [*Startlingly*] There it is again! [*They listen*] It'll be a pony. A warder's life's about the limit. If it wasn't for the missus, I'd sooner sweep streets.

First Warder. I've got used to it, barring a circus like this. The devil himself couldn't get used to that. It's only fit for the movies.

Second Warder. I believe you. Did you see that picture with Duggie in it? 'Ow'd you think 'e does that roof business? We got some pretty tidy cat burglars, but I don't believe there's one could do what he does.

First Warder. Well, I'll tell you. I think he has spring heels; and I notice his hands are very blurry in the picture. I believe he holds a rope, and they take that out afterwards, by some process.

Second Warder. Never thought o' that! But when he falls and catches on that ledge?

First Warder. That's an optical deception. Some of those movie jossers ought to be in prison, the way they deceive the public.

Second Warder. I never saw anything on the screen I liked better than "My Old Dutch"! That fair got me. I took the missus, and I tell you there wasn't a dry eye about the pair of us.

First Warder. Charlie knocks *me*. I feel a better man after I've seen 'im. Now, why is that?

SECOND WARDER. 'E's very 'uman. Must make a pot of money.

FIRST WARDER. I'm wet through—give me another drain. [*Gurgling sounds*] If I catch that chap, you'll 'ave to stop me quick, or I'll manhandle him for sure.

SECOND WARDER. Same here. We'd better toss up which stops the other. Call!

FIRST WARDER. 'Eads.

SECOND WARDER. Which is it? Throw a glim.

The FIRST WARDER *throws from an electric torch the first light of the scene. Their two faces, on the footlight side of the road, are seen close together over the coin.*

SECOND WARDER. Tails—You've lost. [*The glim is dowsed.*] 'Ow do we stand, then? Do I stop you, or do you stop me?

FIRST WARDER. You stop me.

SECOND WARDER. No, I won. That means *I* get the go at him. Lawd Gawd! what a night! Just feel if that rope's all right across the road.

FIRST WARDER. It's taut. Bit too low, though—ought to catch him mid-thigh by rights.

SECOND WARDER. You trust me, old hoss; if it catches 'im as high as that, he stops and goes off sideways, or turns and runs back. It should catch him just below the knee. Then, ten to one he goes over, and we're on to him before he can get up. He'll be goin' a good bat, remember. You'll find me on 'is 'ead when you come to stoppin' me.

FIRST WARDER. To think we can't even smoke. D'you hold with givin' prisoners tobacco, Williams?

SECOND WARDER. On the whole, I do. It sweetens 'em, and that's better for us. I'd give 'em two pipes a week, and stop 'em if they gave a warder any trouble. I've got one or two fellers I'm quite fond of. I'd be glad for 'em to have a smoke every day. Listen! [*They listen. In a whisper*] Footsteps! They are!

FIRST WARDER. Yes.

SECOND WARDER. [*Still in a whisper*] Look here, mate! Just before he gets to the rope, I'll throw the light into his face, then dowse it sharp. He'll start to run forward and go head foremost. Stand by! [*They listen.*]

FIRST WARDER. He's comin' on! Suppose it isn't him?

SECOND WARDER. Must chance that. I'll throw the light as I say——

A moment of utter black tenseness, during which the footsteps are heard clearer and clearer.

Now! Stand by!

He flashes the light on the figure of MATT *advancing along the road. The light is dowsed, the* WARDERS *rush forward. Darkness and the sound of a scramble.*

SECOND WARDER'S VOICE. I've got him!

FIRST WARDER'S VOICE. [*Half strangled*] No, you ruddy fool—you've got me!

The CURTAIN *falls*

EPISODE III

Thirty-two hours have passed. A bedroom at an Inn on the moor. Dark, with streaks of daylight coming in from two curtained windows, back, opening on to a long balcony. Between them a bed juts into the room. Right, forward, a dressing table with chair. Left, back, a washstand. Left, forward, a door opening inwards. At foot of the bed a chair with a woman's undergarments thrown on it. A dressing-gown over the footrail of the bed, some slippers on the left side of the bed. A SHINGLED LADY *asleep in the bed. Knocking on the door. Left.*

LADY. [*Sleepily*] Come in!

A MAID *enters with a can of hot water, which she places on the washstand, Left.*

MAID. 'Alf past seven, Madam.

LADY. [*Yawning*] What sort of day?

MAID. Foggy still. Taking a bath, Madam?

LADY. Yes. Oh! My husband's coming back this evening. I'm to be moved back to the double room.

MAID. Yes, Madam; they told me.

She has drawn aside the curtains, Left, and now

moves round and draws back the curtains, Right.

That escaped convict, Madam ; they haven't got him yet.

LADY. No ? How thrilling !

MAID. It's the fog. He's been out nearly two days. They say it's the young man who killed the detective in Hyde Park, that made such a fuss.

LADY. Oh ? That Captain Denant ! I remember. It might have been worse, then.

MAID. Of course they'll catch him—no one ever gets off.

LADY. Don't they ?

MAID. Oh ! no, Madam ! It wouldn't never do.

LADY. I should have thought in fog like this——

MAID. You see, they got to eat and get clothes. That's where they're caught.

LADY. [*Yawning*] This horrible fog !—one can't ride or fish, or even walk. Shall I get up, or shall I—— ?

MAID. [*Rather coldly*] Just as you please, Madam.

LADY. [*With a laugh*] Well, I suppose I'd better.

MAID. I'll turn the bath on.

LADY. Thank you.

The MAID *goes out, and the* LADY, *in her pyjamas, emerges from bed, feels for her slippers, and puts on her dressing-gown. She goes to a window, and looks out. It is a French window, and slightly open on a short hook.*

LADY. Ugh ! What a day !

Taking sponge and bath towel from the wash-stand, she goes to the door and out. As soon as the door is shut there is a commotion where the bed touches the wall, and from behind the window curtain MATT DENANT *cautiously emerges, glances quickly round, and stretches himself. He looks haggard, sodden, and crumpled, and has his boots in his hand.*

MATT. [*Muttering*] A lady ! Dash it ! I must get out !

He goes to the window and looks cautiously out, then recoils, drawing in his breath with a hiss. Then, after once more glancing round the room, he steps to the door.

LADY'S VOICE. [*Off*] I simply can't take cold baths !

MATT *flattens himself against the wall, so that he will be behind the door if it is opened. And suddenly it is.*

LADY'S VOICE. [*In doorway*] Let me know when the water's hot, please.

MAID'S VOICE. [*Off*] Yes, Madam.

The LADY *re-enters, and passing the door knob from her right hand to her left behind her as she naturally would, closes it without seeing* MATT, *and crosses to the dressing-table, where she sits down and takes up a brush to brush her shingled hair.* MATT *moves quickly to the door, and has his hand on the handle, when his image passes into the*

mirror. The LADY *drops the brush, and faces round with an exclamation on her open mouth.*

MATT. Hush! It's quite O.K.

LADY. Who—how—what d'you mean by coming into my room?

MATT *drops the door handle, turning the key in the lock.*

MATT. [*In a low voice*] Really, I'm most frightfully sorry.

[*Suddenly the fact that he is the escaped convict dawns on her.*

LADY. You're the escaped——[*She starts up to go to the window and call for help; but stops at the gestures he makes.*]

MATT. I wonder if you'd mind awfully speaking pianissimo.

LADY. [*Tensely*] What made you come in here? How did you get in?

MATT. I've been under the bed for hours. You see, I couldn't tell it was a lady.

LADY. D'you mean my hair?

MATT. Oh no! I couldn't see that.

LADY. I didn't snore?

MATT. No; but that's not an infallible test of sex. I didn't either, or you'd have heard me.

LADY. D'you mean to say you went to sleep?

MATT. I'm afraid I did. Of course, if I'd known—[*A pause.*]

LADY. Well, as you're a gentleman, aren't you going?

MATT. I'd simply love to. But where ?

LADY. Really, I can't tell you.

MATT. Look at me ! What can one do in these togs ?

LADY. D'you expect me to lend you some ?

MATT. Hardly. But I'd be eternally grateful if you'd give me something to eat.

LADY. [*Opening a drawer and taking out some chocolate*] This is pretty cool, you know. I ought to ring and hand you over.

MATT. Yes. But—you look such a sport.

LADY. [*Subtly flattered*] I know who you are. Your name's in the paper. But do you realise my position ?

MATT. Afraid I only realise my own.

LADY. If I don't hand you over, how on earth are you going to get out of here without being seen ?

MATT. Might I have that chocolate ?

LADY. [*Taking it from the dressing-table drawer*] It's only local.

MATT. That won't deter me. I've been forty hours on a piece of bread and two raw potatoes. [*He takes the chocolate, bites some off, and puts the rest in his pocket.*] Would you mind frightfully if I drank some water ?

LADY. Of course not.

MATT *goes over to the washstand. When his back is turned she springs to action, but instead of going to door or window, rapidly conceals underneath the bedclothes the corsets and underclothes flung on the chair*

at the foot of the bed, then returns to the dressing-table. MATT *is drinking deeply.*

MATT. [*Turning*] That's good. Ever had the hunted feeling ? [*She shakes her head*] Well, don't ! A coursed hare is nothing to it. Oh ! I am so jolly stiff !

LADY. [*Thrilled in spite of herself*] Do you know you're only three miles from the Prison ?

MATT. I do. The first night I meant to get near Exeter by morning, and where d'you think I was ? A mile from where I started. I'd been ringing. That's what you do in fog. Is that a razor ?

LADY. [*On stilts*] My husband's. Why ? [*As* MATT *takes it up*] No ! There's a limit, Captain Denant. You can't have a weapon.

MATT. No, of course ! But would you mind awfully if I shaved ? You see, like this [*Passes his hand over his chin*] I haven't an earthly, even if I could get clothes. There's nothing more attractive than a three days' beard. [*While speaking he has lathered himself without a brush*] I'm a very quick shaver. It takes me three minutes. I can do it in thirty-two and a half strokes.

LADY. [*Gasping*] Well, I never— It takes me [*hand to her neck*] that is—I mean—Have you nearly been caught ?

MATT. [*Between scraping motions of the razor*] Twice I've been within twenty feet of the hounds——

LADY. Hounds !

MATT. Human ! Just out of their jaws. [*Groans*] D'you know anything so frightful as a shave like this ?

LADY. Well, really——

MATT. I mean except, of course, not having it.

LADY. How did you get in here ?

MATT. You see, I *did* so want a dry night, so I hid up and waited till every light was out. I tried to get in below, and couldn't; then I made a boss shot at the corner of the balcony and fell on my back—— Did you feel a sort of earthquake ? No ? I did. When I got over that, I had another shot at a pillar and made it that time. I chose your window because it was open—hooked it up again and slid straight under the bed. I meant to sneak some clothes, and be off before daylight, but I only woke up when the maid came in. [*She indicates a towel; he steeps it in water and wipes his face*] D'you mind if I put on my boots ? [*He stoops and puts them on.*]

LADY. So you actually slept under there ?

MATT. Alas ! I did.

LADY. Well ! It's about the limit.

MATT. Will be if I get clear—no one ever has.

LADY. Tell me, Captain Denant, weren't you at Harcheston with my brother—he used to talk of a Matt Denant, who was an awfully good runner.

MATT. Quite likely. I was at school with an awful lot of brothers. What was his name ?

LADY. No. That won't do.

MATT. You're right. Never tell a convict anything he can tell anybody else.

LADY. I really don't see how I can help you.

MATT. Nor do I, worse luck !

LADY. I read your trial.

MATT. [*Standing up*] And you think me a bad lot, of course. [*Bitterly*] D'you know how I spend most of my time in prison? Holding imaginary conversations with the respectable.

LADY. [*With a smile*] Respectable! D'you think you're holding a real one now?

MATT. I certainly don't. . . . I . . . I beg your pardon. . . . You know what I mean. But I bet most people have put me down a rotter.

LADY. Was all you said true?

MATT. Gospel.

LADY. I suppose they do hunt those girls rather.

MATT. Yes, but you know, I didn't even really see red. I've been sorry enough for that poor chap.

LADY. Well, Captain Denant, what now?

MATT. You've been most awfully kind and I don't want to impose on you; but I shall never get out of here as I am.

LADY. Why not?

MATT. [*Jerking his head towards the window*] They're too thoughtful. There's a picket out there.

The LADY *turns to the window and looks out; then she turns to* MATT *and finds him smiling.*

Oh! No, I wasn't scared. One doesn't give one's own kind away.

LADY. I don't know that. Go and try some of those other rooms. Try the couple next door to me.

A knock on the door. BOTH *stand alert.*

LADY. Yes?

VOICE OF MAID. [*Off*] The bath water's hot now, Madam.

LADY. All right. Thank you. [*Her finger is on her lips*] D'you think she could hear us ?

MATT. Hope not. [*Going close*] Thanks most awfully. You don't know how decent it's been after a year in there, to talk to a lady. I won't leave any traces.

LADY. What are you going to do ?

MATT. Wait till he's looking the other way, sneak along the balcony, drop at the end, and bolt for it again.

LADY. Are you still a good runner ?

MATT. Pretty fair, if I wasn't so stiff.

LADY. [*After a long look at him*] No ! Look here ! When I go to my bath I'll make sure there's no one. If I don't come back, slip down the stairs, they're almost opposite. In the hall, hanging, you'll find my husband's old Burberry and fishing basket, rod, and fishing hat ; a long brown Burberry, with stains, and flies in the hat. Put them on and go out of the front door ; the river's down to the left. Can you fish ? [*At his nod*] You'd better, then. The bathroom's not that side, so I shan't see you. But—whistle "Lady, be good," if you know it.

MATT. Rather ! It's the only tune that's got into prison. Well, I can't thank you—you're just a brick ! [*He holds out his hand.*]

LADY. [*Taking it*] Good luck ! [*She passes him to the door*] Wait a second ! [*Getting a flask from drawer*] Take this. If you see anyone looking at

you—drink! Nothing gives one more confidence in a man than to see him drinking.

MATT. Splendid! What are you going to say to your husband?

LADY. Um! Yes! He comes to-night. Well, if he doesn't like it, he'll have to lump it. Oh! And these two pounds. It's all I've got here. [*She has taken two pounds out of her bag lying on the dressing-table.*]

MATT. [*Moved*] By George! I think you're sublime!

LADY. I'm afraid I doubt it.

MATT. If I'm caught, I shall say I pinched everything, of course; and if I get clear, I'll——

LADY. Oh! don't bother about that! Get behind the door now.

MATT *gets behind the door, and she opens it and goes out. After a moment she returns.*

LADY. All clear!

Then, closing the door behind her, she goes. MATT *takes a look round the room to see that he has not left any trace, and moves softly to the door. His hand is on the handle, when it is opened by the* MAID; *he has just time to shrink behind it while she stands looking curiously round the room, as if for somebody or something.*

LADY'S VOICE. [*Off*] Ellen! D'you mind going and getting me the suit I sent down to dry last night?

MAID. [*Starting*] Yes, Madam.

She goes, closing the door.

MATT *has just time for a breath of relief when it is opened again and the* LADY *reappears.*

LADY. [*Seeing him breathless*] This is a bit hectic. [*In a whisper*] Now! Quick!

MATT *dives past her. She stands a moment, hustles out her underclothing from under the bedclothes, then drawing the door to, goes to the window, opens it a little wider, and stands there listening. In half a minute the faint strains of "Lady, be good," whistled, are heard.*

LADY. [*Waving a stocking like a hat. Under her breath*] Gone away!

Whistling "Lady, be good," she crosses jauntily towards the door, meeting the MAID, *who is coming in with the dried suit. Continuing to whistle, she passes her with a roll of the eyes, leaving the* MAID *in three minds as*

The CURTAIN *falls.*

PART II

PART II

EPISODE IV

Seven hours have passed. Dartmeet. An open space of fern and grass, above the river and away from trippers.

MATT, *who has been working along the river all the morning, is squatting with his catch beside him—some eight smallish trout. He is eating the last of his chocolate and drinking diligently from the already empty flask. The more so as an* OLD GENTLEMAN *in Lovat tweeds is straying towards him.* MATT *begins taking his rod to pieces.*

OLD GENTLEMAN. [*Approaching from Left*] Afternoon! Cleared up too well for *you*, I'm afraid.

MATT. Yes, it's a bit bright now.

OLD GENTLEMAN. Best eating in the world, those little brown chaps. Except perhaps the blue trout in the Tirol. "Blaue forellen" with butter and potatoes, and a bottle of Vöslauer Goldeck, eh?

MATT. My Golly, yes! [*He looks wolfishly at his trout.*]

OLD GENTLEMAN. [*Eyeing him askance*] Very foggy this morning. Worst point about the moor, these fogs. Only good for convicts—um?

MATT. [*Subduing a start*] Escapes, you mean? But they never get clear, I believe.

OLD GENTLEMAN. No, I'm told; but they try, you know—they try. I've often wondered what I should do if I blundered into an escaped convict.

MATT. Yes, sir; bit of a problem.

OLD GENTLEMAN. [*Sitting down on his overcoat*] Between the Law and one's gentlemanly instincts—if it's gentlemanlike to dally with a felon—I wonder!

MATT. [*Warming to the subject*] A chap who tries to escape must be a sportsman, anyway. He takes a pretty long chance.

OLD GENTLEMAN. Yes, I don't envy a man in this country; we're a law-abiding people. I remember being very much struck with the difference in America last year—vital race, that—sublime disregard of the law themselves, and a strong sense of moral turpitude in others. Been in America?

MATT. I was out West ranching when the war broke out.

OLD GENTLEMAN. Indeed! Judging by the films, escaping justice is still fashionable there. I think I prefer a more settled country.

MATT. Personally, I've got rather a complex. Escaped from Germany in the war.

OLD GENTLEMAN. Did you? How very interesting!

MATT. If you want to get thin. It's a top-hole cure for adipose. An escape's no picnic.

OLD GENTLEMAN. I imagine not, indeed. Where did you get over the border?

MATT. Holland, after three days and nights on beets and turnips. Do you know the turnip in a state of nature, Sir? He's a homely fellow—only beaten by the beet. Beg your pardon, Sir, it slipped out. By the way, a convict got off the day before yesterday.

OLD GENTLEMAN. Yes, I saw that—a Captain Matt Denant. I read his case with interest at the time. How did it strike you?

MATT. [*On guard*] Don't believe I remember it.

OLD GENTLEMAN. What? The Hyde Park case!

MATT. Oh! Ah! yes. There was a girl. In those cases they might wait till you complain.

OLD GENTLEMAN. The detective was undoubtedly doing his duty. And yet, quite a question—Rather dangerous giving the police a discretion on morals. The police are very like ourselves; and—er—most of us haven't got discretion, and the rest haven't got morals. The young man didn't complain, I think. D'you happen to recollect?

MATT. [*With an uneasy look*] So far as I remember, he said she was an intellectual.

The OLD GENTLEMAN *has taken out a cigar-case and is offering it.*

OLD GENTLEMAN. Smoke?

MATT. Thanks very much. I've got into a bad habit of coming out without tobacco.

They bite and light cigars.

OLD GENTLEMAN. I suppose one might run across that convict fellow any moment. It would be a little like meeting an adder. The poor thing only

wants to get away from you. And yet, if you don't break its back, ten to one it'll bite a dog. I had two dogs die of snakebite. It's a duty, perhaps—what do you say ?

MATT. Probably. But I don't always do mine.

OLD GENTLEMAN. Oh ! don't you ? I'm so glad of that. Neither do I.

MATT. Do you know that prison ? It's a bad style of architecture.

OLD GENTLEMAN. No. The fact is, I've had the misfortune in my time to send a good many people to prison. And in those days I did make a point of seeing a prison now and then. I remember I used to give my Juries a pass to go and see where they sent their fellow-beings. Once I tested whether they went to look round or not, and out of three Juries—no, it was four—how many do you think had had the curiosity ?

MATT. None.

OLD GENTLEMAN. Isn't that a little cynical ? [*With his sideway bird-like glance*] No, it was—one. Ha !

MATT. Who'd want to go into a prison ? I'd as soon visit the Morgue. The bodies there aren't *living*, anyway.

OLD GENTLEMAN. They tell me prisons are much improved. They've introduced a human feeling.

MATT. Have they ? Splendid ! What was the date of that ?

OLD GENTLEMAN. [*His eyes busy*] They've abolished the arrows, anyway. And I believe they

don't shave their heads now. Do you know any convicts?

MATT. [*With a wriggle*] I? No. Only one.

OLD GENTLEMAN. Indeed? And is he interesting?

MATT. The most interesting chap I know.

OLD GENTLEMAN. Ha! Suppose this escaped convict suddenly turned up here? (*Jerking his thumb towards* MATT) What should you do?

MATT. Run like a hare.

OLD GENTLEMAN. Dear me, yes. I think it would depend on whether anyone was about. Human nature is very—er—sensitive. D'you find this climate bracing? Dartmoor has quite a reputation.

MATT. Overrated—I think.

OLD GENTLEMAN. You know it well?

MATT. No; this is my first visit.

OLD GENTLEMAN. And will you be here long?

MATT. Hope not.

OLD GENTLEMAN. Beautiful spot—Dartmeet!

MATT. I prefer Two Bridges. [*Putting up his rod and whistling* "*Lady, be good.*"

OLD GENTLEMAN. Ah! What fly have you been using?

MATT. Just a tag.

OLD GENTLEMAN. I've not fished for years. [*As* MATT *suddenly passes his hand over his brow under his hat*] Anything the matter?

MATT. Afraid I shall have to abandon your excellent cigar. I've enjoyed it, but I'm smoking on a rather empty stomach.

He looks ruefully at the unsmoked portion of his cigar, and pitches it away.

OLD GENTLEMAN. Dear me! Yes. I remember that feeling coming over me once at the Royal Academy banquet—just before I had to make a speech. [*Another of his birdlike glances*] Tobacco must be one of the great deprivations in prison, I always think. Didn't you find that so in—in—Germany?

MATT. [*Breathing rather fast and completing the dismantlement of his fishing rod*] Oh! we got tobacco now and then.

OLD GENTLEMAN. And empty stomachs too, I'm afraid.

MATT. Yes.

OLD GENTLEMAN. One never ceases to be grateful to those who endured such things. [*Offering his cigar case*] Will you try again after tea? These moor teas with cream and jam.

MATT. [*Taking it*] Well, thank you, Sir. I shall down him next time.

MATT *is now ready for departure, for he has been getting increasingly uneasy with this* OLD GENTLEMAN. *He takes up his basket and lays the fish within it.*

OLD GENTLEMAN. Well [*Getting up*] I must be getting on too. It's been very pleasant. I've enjoyed our little talk. At my time of life one doesn't often get new sensations.

MATT. (*Nonplussed*) Good Lord, Sir! Have I given you any?

OLD GENTLEMAN. Well, I don't remember ever having talked before to a prisoner who'd escaped from—Germany.

MATT. Good-bye, Sir.

OLD GENTLEMAN. Good-bye, Captain Denant—[MATT *starts*] I hope you'll have a pleasant journey, especially as no one seems to have noticed our little chat.

MATT. [*Staring at him*] D'you mind frightfully telling me how you spotted me ?

OLD GENTLEMAN. Not at all ! First, the way you looked at your trout—shall I say—er—wolfishly ? And then—forgive me—your legs.

MATT. [*Drawing up his Burberry and contemplating his legs*] Yes. I hoped you'd think I was a leader of fashion.

OLD GENTLEMAN. And there was another thing—your obvious sympathy with yourself.

MATT. That's a prison habit, Sir. You're not allowed to sympathise with other people, for fear of contaminating them. Before I got into quod I don't remember ever feeling sorry for myself. But I doubt if I shall ever again feel sorry for anyone else.

OLD GENTLEMAN. That must be very natural. Well, it's been most interesting, because now you see I know what I should do——

MATT. [*Intently*] Is it indiscreet to ask, Sir ?

OLD GENTLEMAN. Well, Captain Denant, this time —I say *this* time—wink the other eye. Good-day to you !

MATT. Good-day, Sir. It's most frightfully sporting of you. For the moment I feel quite human.

OLD GENTLEMAN. Do you know, that's been rather the effect on me. Original sin, I suppose. Good-day!

He goes off, watching the smoke of his cigar and smiling faintly to himself. On MATT, *affected by kindness,*

the CURTAIN *falls*

EPISODE V

An hour has passed. On the Moor ; a high spot.

FOUR TRIPPERS, *two men and two women, disgorged from a Ford car, are picnicking. One of the men, about fifty, in blue clothes, has a Merchant Service look and a concertina ; the other looks more like a shopkeeper, and is perhaps fifty-five. His wife is a stout woman, about forty, of mellow appearance. The other woman is the shopkeeper's sister, dried-up and spinsterish. Their clothes are of a suitable nature—some feathers. They are all eating heavily.*

WIFE. Captain, you're a prophet—considerin' what it was when we left Ashburton. I call this lovely ! *Eats.*

CAPTAIN. Takes a bit o' weather to flummox a sailor, ma'am. *Drinks.*

WIFE. " You trust the Captain," I said to Pinkem this morning, didn't I, father ? *I* knew, you see ; [*archly*] my corns weren't shootin'.

SISTER. That's not very nice, Fanny.

WIFE. Why not ? I'd like to see some one who 'asn't corns, if the truth was known. 'Ave another

of these cut rounds, Dolly, and cheer up. Father, don't you eat any more cream—your eyes are yeller.

SHOPKEEPER. When I first came to Devonshire I could put away 'alf a pound o' cream at a meal.

WIFE. Yes, and it spoiled your temper for life.

SHOPKEEPER. Am I bad-tempered, Dolly ?

SISTER. So-so, James.

SHOPKEEPER. What do you say, Captain ?

CAPTAIN. You keep it for your wife, my boy. Outside the bosom of your family you're a perfect cherub.

WIFE. Captain, you're an 'opeless Benedick.

CAPTAIN. Bachelor born, Ma'am.

WIFE. With a wife in every port, eh ?

SISTER. Oh ! That reely isn't nice, Fanny ; so old-fashioned, too.

CAPTAIN. Is it, Ma'am ?

WIFE. Now, Captain, don't go shockin' Dolly. Oh ! There's an insect on my skirt ! I never seen one like it.

SHOPKEEPER. Kill it, then.

WIFE. Why ?

SHOPKEEPER. Always kill what you don't know.

WIFE. [*Flipping it off*] It's only a biddle—poor thing ! Give us a tune, Captain.

The CAPTAIN *draws a long blast from his concertina.*

Hallo ! 'Oo's this ?

MATT, *in Burberry, with rod and basket, has appeared Left, and stands lifting his hat.*

MATT. Afternoon! Wonder if you could put me right for Bovey?

SHOPKEEPER. Bovey! That's a goodish step—matter of twelve miles, I should say.

MATT. My Lord! Not really?

SHOPKEEPER. You go down the 'ill, through Ponsworthy to Widecombe, and up the 'ill, turn to the left, and ask again.

MATT. I see. Will there be anyone to ask?

SHOPKEEPER. I shouldn't think so.

CAPTAIN. Had any sport, Sir?

MATT. [*Opening the basket*] Eight, rather small.

WIFE. My! Don't they look nice! Such good eatin', too.

MATT. Would you like them, Ma'am?

WIFE. [*With affected restraint*] I'm sure it's very good of you.

CAPTAIN. Don't you miss the chance, Mrs Pinkem; nothing like moor trout, with a moor appetite.

SISTER. [*Distantly*] I'm *sure* it's most kind, from a stranger.

WIFE. [*Suddenly*] Well, I don't know, if you're so obliging. 'And me the *Daily Mail*, Father. I'll wrap 'em up; and thank you very much. I quite appreciate it.

MATT. That's splendid! [*He hands them*] Turned out quite nice, hasn't it? Have you come far?

SHOPKEEPER. From Ashburton—ten mile.

MATT. Heard anything there of the escaped convict?

SHOPKEEPER. What about it? Haven't looked at the paper last day or two.

WIFE. Another escape!——oh, my!

MATT. Rather! He got off in the fog, night before last.

SISTER. I always hate to think of one of those dreadful men at large. You can't sleep in your bed.

CAPTAIN. Don't you get *too* excited, Ma'am. Think of the choice 'e's got.

WIFE. [*Scanning the paper*] Why! It's the man that killed the poor detective in 'Yde Park! That villain! It says 'ere they nearly got him—twice.

MATT, *who is eyeing them closely, eyes a loaf even more closely, and tries to manœuvre into a position to annex it.*

SHOPKEEPER. I 'ope everybody's helping to catch him. He must be a regular desperado. That was a bad case. I never believed the girl.

SISTER. I should think not, indeed!

SHOPKEEPER. Nor the young man neither. They were up to no good there. They tell me those London parks are in a proper state.

CAPTAIN. They ain't a Sunday School, that's certain.

WIFE. Fie, Captain!

SISTER. [*Acidly*] I believe some people quite sympathised with him. Fancy!

MATT. Well, if you won't think it too eccentric, I did, for one.

SHOPKEEPER. You!—Why?

MATT. I thought he had devilish hard luck.

SHOPKEEPER. Ah! there's always a fuss made about the Law. You can't even 'ang a woman for murderin' her 'usband without a lot of 'ysterical nonsense. Look at that case not long ago—there was a petition as long as your arm.

CAPTAIN. I remember. The young chap was a steward. I don't recall this Hyde Park case.

WIFE. Why! the detective arrested one o' those women this young man had been sittin' with—a gentleman he was too—and if he didn't 'it him an' break 'is 'ead, an' kill 'im, poor man!

CAPTAIN. Then why didn't they string him up?

MATT. The jury found it was a quarrel, not an attempt to evade arrest. Besides, in falling the detective hit his head on the iron railing of the Row, and the doctors said he died of the concussion.

SHOPKEEPER. That didn't ought to have got 'im off. He hit the man. If 'e 'adn't 'it him, 'e wouldn't have fallen.

MATT. Exactly! Brilliant! But if the detective hadn't seized him, he wouldn't have hit him.

SHOPKEEPER. Well! *I'd* 'ave hung 'im.

WIFE. Don't be so bloodthirsty, Father!

SHOPKEEPER. Well, I would. Hitting an officer for doing his duty. Sitting with a woman in the Park, too! He only got off because he was quality.

MATT. Don't you think that's a superstition?

The SHOPKEEPER *glares at him, but decides that he is a gentleman, and therefore prejudiced, and only snorts slightly.*

SISTER. Did they punish the woman?

MATT. What for, ma'am ?

SISTER. *I'd* keep them shut up; then they wouldn't tempt young men—the 'arpies !

MATT. [*Unexpectedly*] Oh ! God !

They all stare at him. Then the SHOPKEEPER *fatuously breaks the silence.*

SHOPKEEPER. Can't say I was ever tempted by a woman.

MATT. No, you've got a Ford car, I see. D'you find them good in this sort of country ?

SHOPKEEPER. [*Distantly*] I do, Sir.

MATT. Do they get up these hills ?

SHOPKEEPER. I should think so. I'd engage to catch any convict with my car.

MATT. Would you ? [*A thought strikes him*] Splendid !

WIFE. Well, I think we ought to be gettin' 'ome. 'And me the teapot, Captain. Now, Dolly ! Never mind those bits o' cake and bread—they're no good. Just leave the deebris. I'd like to be in before dark, with a convict loose like this. He might come prowlin' round, pickin' things up.

MATT *with a secret movement pockets some scraps.*

MATT. Good afternoon ! Hope you'll enjoy the trout. [*He moves away out of the picture.*]

WIFE and CAPTAIN. Good afternoon—Good afternoon, Sir !

MATT *salutes and vanishes, Right.*

SISTER. Here, Fanny ! Did you see him pocket the scraps ?

WIFE. No! Why, he's a gentleman—didn't you hear his sniffy way o' talkin'?

SISTER. I saw him with my own eyes—two bits of cake and a round.

Sound of a car being started.

SHOPKEEPER. I say! [*Jumping up*] What's 'e doin' with the Ford?

CAPTAIN. Hi, there! You, Sir!

SHOPKEEPER. He's got in. Hi!

SISTER. The villain!

ALL. Hi! hi! hi!

Sounds of a levanting car, and a halloed "So long!"

The TWO MEN *run out of the picture.*

WIFE. Well, I——

SISTER. *You!* Taking his fish like that! You might ha' known he was a thief. Why—why—of course! He's the—oh! oh!

WIFE. Dry up, Dolly! 'Ow are we to get 'ome?

The TWO MEN *run back into the picture, breathless.*

SHOPKEEPER. Well, of all the impudent villains!

CAPTAIN. I'm jiggered! [*He sits down with his hands on his knees and goes off into wheezy laughter.*]

SISTER. 'Ow *can* you? 'Ow *can* you, Captain? And we talking about him all the time!

CAPTAIN. [*Stopping*] What! Him!

SISTER. The escaped convict! He hadn't the leggins of a gentleman.

CAPTAIN. What! Did *you* look at his legs, Ma'am?

WIFE. It's all your fault, Pinkem ; you and Dolly's —callin' 'im names. If you 'adn't called 'im names, he wouldn't 'a stole the car—talkin' of hanging 'im ! I could see 'im gettin' heated.

SHOPKEEPER. You called 'im a villain yourself. Well—Bovey—we know where to look for him.

CAPTAIN. A blind, old bean.

SHOPKEEPER. I say 'e will go there.

CAPTAIN. I say 'e won't.

SHOPKEEPER. I say 'e'll see we'll think 'e won't, and put the double cross on us.

CAPTAIN. Well, I say, 'e'll see we'll think 'e's going to put the double cross on us.

WIFE. Oh ! My corns !

SISTER. Impudence, givin' us 'is fish !

CAPTAIN. Well, there's nothin' for it but tote the things and walk till we get a lift.

WIFE. Oh ! my corns are shootin'. I can't walk.

CAPTAIN. Cheerio, Ma'am ! Be English.

SHOPKEEPER. English ! Tisn't *your* car.

CAPTAIN. Don't worry, old sport. 'E'll leave that in a ditch when he gets there.

SHOPKEEPER. There—ye-es—John o' Groats ?

CAPTAIN. Come along, Ma'am. Lift your corns well up. I'll give you a tune.

They have picked up the gear and are trailing off Right, leaving papers strewn about.

WIFE. Oh ! Look ! We've left 'is fish.

SISTER. Fish ! Infra dig, I call it. [*She sniffs.*]

WIFE. Nonsense, Dolly ! Dish of trout like that'll cost five shillings in Ashburton. May as well 'ave

the worth of the petrol 'e'll use. Father, pick 'em up.

The SHOPKEEPER *turns back, picks them up in the* Daily Mail, *puts the combination to his nose, finds it good and follows the others off as the* CAPTAIN *begins to play his concertina and*

The CURTAIN *falls*

EPISODE VI

Half an hour has passed. An open space with the moor rising from it.

A MAN *in plus fours and his* WIFE *are returning from a walk. The* WIFE *has stopped and is moving her foot uneasily.*

WIFE. I've got something in my shoe, Philip.

MAN. What ?

WIFE. I've got something in my shoe.

MAN. [*In front, stopping too*] Take it off, then. [*Goes back to her*] Hold on to me.

WIFE. [*Taking off shoe and shaking it*] It isn't in the shoe—it's inside the stocking.

MAN. You can't sit down here; the ground's still wet.

WIFE. There—feel !

MAN. Yes, I can feel it.

WIFE. [*Standing on one leg*] Well ! Hold me.

He holds her and she has slipped her stocking off when there is the sound of an approaching car.

MAN. Look out ! Here's a car !

WIFE. [*Letting her skirt fall and standing on one leg*] Bother !

Sound of the car stopping.

MAN. Hallo! He's coming to speak to us.

The WIFE *bends and slips the shoe on hurriedly, but her dress is short. She holds the stocking behind her.*

MATT. [*Appearing*] Beg your pardon, Sir, but can you direct me to Bovey?

MAN. Afraid we're strangers. Pity you didn't ask as you came through Widecombe.

MATT. Well, but it's up this hill, anyway, isn't it?

MAN. Must be, I think. That's the way to Heytor Rock.

MATT. Oh! Can you see the promised land from there?

WIFE. Yes. You go up the hill and turn to the right, then to the left through a gate.

MATT. And ask again, I suppose. [*Preparing to leave*] Thanks very much.

MAN. Fine place, the moor, Sir. Splendid air.

MATT. [*Drily*] Oh! Splendid. So dry and clear!

WIFE. [*With a giggle*] Yes, the fog *was* awful yesterday.

MAN. They say Bovey's pretty.

MATT. Yes, I've some Aunts there. Good place for Aunts.

WIFE. [*Laughing*] What makes a good place for Aunts?

MATT. Oh! not too stirring. Awfully good knitting there, I believe.

MAN. Ha! That's good. Ha!

MATT. I must get on, or I shall be late for tea. So I whizz past Heytor rocks——?

WIFE. Yes, and come down on the church.

MATT. Thanks very much. My Aunts are close there, I know. Good afternoon.

He lifts his hat discreetly and goes, Right. The MAN *and* WIFE *gaze after him.*

WIFE. What a nice young man!

MAN. That was good about Aunts. Ha!

Sound of car moving on.

Now for your stocking!

WIFE. [*Bending down and taking off her shoe*] I should think he was County, wouldn't you?

MAN. [*Holding her from behind*] Um! Only "County" would drive such a shockin' bad car.

WIFE. He saw my leg and kept his eyes off it. I thought that was charming of him.

MAN. Fellow-feelin'; he had some shockin' leg gear on himself.

WIFE. [*Turning stocking inside out*] See, there it is—a beastly little three-cornered bit of grit. Extraordinary how they get in——

MAN. [*Suddenly*] Look out! Here's a constable on a bike.

The WIFE *drops her skirt and stands balancing again, the stocking in her hand. A very hot* CONSTABLE *appears, wheeling a bicycle.*

CONSTABLE. Zeen convict pass?

MAN. [*Astonished*] Convict? No.

CONSTABLE. Zeen anybody?

MAN. Only a car.

CONSTABLE. What zort of car ?

MAN. Ford, I think.

CONSTABLE. Whu was in it ?

MAN. A man.

CONSTABLE. What zort of man ?

MAN. Oh !—er—a gentleman.

CONSTABLE. How d'yu know ?

MAN. By his voice.

WIFE. He spoke to us.

CONSTABLE. What d'e zay ?

MAN. Asked the way to Bovey.

CONSTABLE. Ha ! What 'ad 'e on ?

MAN. Long Burberry and a hat like mine ; he was quite all right.

CONSTABLE. [*Mopping his face*] Was 'e ? Bovey —yu zay ?

WIFE. Yes, he had some Aunts there—he was going to tea with them.

CONSTABLE. [*Deeply*] Aunts in Bovey ! Did yu direct 'im ?

WIFE. We told him to go by Heytor rocks. Wasn't that right ?

CONSTABLE. Well, yu've directed the escaped convict.

MAN. [*Alarmed*] No, really ! But I tell you——

WIFE. He was quite charming.

CONSTABLE. Was 'e ? 'Ow much start's 'e got ?

MAN. Oh ! not five minutes. Of course, I didn't know—I should never have——

CONSTABLE. [*Muttering and mopping*] This plaguey 'ill !

MAN. Hadn't you better telephone to Bovey ?

CONSTABLE. [*Smartly*] Bovey ! Why d'yu suppose he spoke to 'ee ? Because 'e idn' goin' to Bovey and wants me to think 'e is.

WIFE. But really he was a gentleman.

CONSTABLE. [*Drily*] Volk 'e stole that car from 'alf an hour gone, don't think so. [*He mops his face.*

WIFE. I can't believe——

MAN. There were his legs [*To* CONSTABLE, *whose eyes are on the lady's leg*] I noticed they looked like nothing at all.

CONSTABLE. Then why didn' yu stop 'im ?

MAN. [*Flustered*] I would have, of course, if I'd suspected for a moment.

CONSTABLE. Stop first—suspect arterwards.

MAN. Well, I'm very sorry. If I'd——

CONSTABLE. 'Tes done now. I must get down along sharp and telephone.

He turns and wheels his bicycle off to the road.

WIFE. [*On one leg*] I don't see why you need be sorry, Philip. He *was* a gentleman.

MAN. A convict's a convict ; you can't play about with the Law.

WIFE. Well, we have, that's one comfort. That constable didn't keep *his* eyes off my leg.

MAN. I suppose you'd have had me get into a row with the police !

WIFE. Don't be silly, Philip ! You needn't get angry because your nerves are rattled. No, don't hold me, I can put it on perfectly by myself.

She stands wobbling on one leg, and pulls the stocking on.

MAN. The brass of that chap—talking about his Aunts!

WIFE. You thought it very funny, when he did.

MAN. If I'd known——

WIFE. Oh! Yes, if you'd known—you haven't an ounce of original sin in you. Thank goodness, I have.

MAN. Where? *I've* never——

WIFE. No, I don't keep it for you.

MAN. Hallo! He's coming back.

WIFE. Who? The constable?

MAN. No—that chap—the convict. [*Sounds of car.*]

WIFE. Hooray!

MAN. What do you mean—hooray? What am I to do? This is infernal.

WIFE. [*Maliciously*] Run out and stop him, of course.

MAN. [*On one leg and the other*] He'd run over me. These chaps are desperate.

WIFE. Well, *I* will, then; and warn him of the constable.

MAN. You won't!—Hallo! He's stopping. That's worse. What the devil shall I do now?

The WIFE *laughs. Sounds of car stopping.* MATT *reappears.*

MATT. Awfully sorry, but my car jibbed. There's another way round, isn't there? Through Widecombe, to the right—I saw a road?

MAN. Um! Well—I—er——

WIFE. Yes, but I shouldn't advise you to take it.

MATT. Must, I'm afraid. My car started to back down the hill.

MAN. I'm afraid—er—that I—er—ought to——

WIFE. My husband means that there's a constable in Widecombe [*Pointing.*]

MATT. Yes. [*Looking back under his hand*] I see him.

WIFE. So you'd better go on up.

MATT. There are *two* up there, you see. My car's very sensitive.

WIFE. Oh, dear!

MAN. Joan! [*Resolutely*] Now, Sir, that constable's been talking to us. The game's up. If you don't mind, I'll take that car. He says it isn't yours.

MATT. [*Stepping back*] You know that's most frightfully true. But then—it isn't yours either.

MAN. Well, just let's argue it. I'm afraid you're helpless.

MATT. What do you take me for?

MAN. Why—er—the escaped convict, if you know what I mean.

MATT. Oh! Well—even so, I've still got a kick in me. I see your point of view, of course; but unfortunately I've got my own.

MAN. After that constable, I simply can't play about with it.

MATT. Look here! I've got a brain-wave. Let's all go into Widecombe in the car?

MAN. Ah! thanks very much; I thought you'd be sporting.

MATT. You see, if you're with me, I shall get through Widecombe all right, and I'll drop you just on the far side.

MAN. But—! What? No—that won't——

MATT. It's all right. You take me in custody into Widecombe—you can't help it if I whizz through and shoot you out. I want to make it easy for you, and I hope you want to make it easy for me.

MAN. Why should I? An escaped convict!

MATT. What do you call *yourself*?

MAN. What! Just an average man.

MATT. D'you mean to say the average man isn't a sportsman?

MAN. Yes. But I've had warning. I'm up against it.

WIFE. *I'll* come in the car. If you're with a lady, you'll get through without being spotted.

MATT. Splendid! Thanks ever so! Will you get in?

MAN. Joan!

MATT. Put yourself in my position, Sir——

MAN. Look here! I ought to be knocking you down and sitting on your head, if you know what I mean.

MATT. [*Squaring up*] Well, any little thing you've got to do, please do it quickly.

MAN. Well, I mean—that's very crude.

WIFE. [*Ironically*] Oh! no, Philip! Oh, no!

MAN. Well, suppose you let me drive.

MATT. Why should I? I stole the car. Now, Madam, shall we start?

WIFE. [*Winding her scarf round her face*] Right-o!

MAN. This is monstrous! Look here, Sir, you seem to think——

MATT. I'll tell you what I think— [*Grimly*] I've been in purgatory too long, and I'm going to get out, and you're not going to stop me, if you know what I mean.

MAN. I jolly well am!

WIFE. Philip!

MAN. I'm not going to have it. If you won't surrender, I shall tackle you.

MATT. [*Dangerously*] Oh! [*He takes a spanner out of his pocket.*]

WIFE. [*Stepping between them—to* MATT] D'you know, I think you'd better go on.

MATT. I think so, too. Sorry to be a boor and bring out a thing like this. [*Tapping the spanner*] But I'm not playing, you see. [*Sombrely*] The life we live spoils our sense of humour! Good-bye, Ma'am, I'm very grateful to *you*.

He turns and vanishes.

MAN. Look here! You're not going like that—I'm damned if you are! Stop!

WIFE. Masterly, Philip! Masterly! [*Sound of a car starting*] Run! My dear! Run! It's all right. You'll be too late.

MAN. You really *are*——

They stand looking at each other as the sound of the car fails slowly, and

The CURTAIN *falls*

EPISODE VII

An hour has passed.

In a gravel pit on the edge of the moor are a wheelbarrow, with a pick in it, and MATT *lying on his face, apparently asleep, waiting for dark.*

From Right comes the figure of a LABOURER. *He is a burly great fellow with a shovel. Seeing the recumbent figure, he stands still, gazing. Then, turning, he goes back whence he came.* MATT, *who has been conscious of this visitor, gathers himself to spring up and rush away. Then he takes a resolution and lies down again in the same attitude, as if asleep. The* LABOURER *returns, followed by another* LABOURER *as big as himself. The* FIRST LABOURER *clears his throat.*

MATT. [*Sitting up with his feet under him*] Well, my men! What's the matter with you?

FIRST LABOURER. Beg pardon, Zurr. We'm lukin' for th' escaped convict. We 'ad a zort of a thought as yu med be 'err.

MATT. Did you? That's pretty good! And now you see I'm not, suppose you apologise?

FIRST LABOURER. [*Cautiously*] 'Course, ef we knu 'u'm yu werr——

MATT. Whom do you work for ?

FIRST LABOURER. Varmer Brownin'. Tes 'is grazin' yere.

MATT. I'll see Farmer Browning. It's funny, but I don't altogether like being taken for an escaped convict.

FIRST LABOURER. Yas, I rackon as 'ow yu'd better zee Maester Browning. George, goo and vind Maester. 'E'm in th' orchard long across.

The SECOND LABOURER *goes off, Left.*

FIRST LABOURER. We'm 'ad nues o' this joker, yu zee. Zeemingly 'e pinched a car and we'm found it just back along in the ditch. 'Tes the zame old car, tu.

MATT. What on earth's the car to do with me ?

FIRST LABOURER. A don' zay nothin' 'bout that. Maester'll know when 'e comes.

MATT. I'll go and meet him. [*He makes as if to rise.*]

FIRST LABOURER. No, yu zett therr.

MATT. Now, look here, my friend ! Do I talk like a convict ?

FIRST LABOURER. Can't zay, never 'eerd none. They'm town folk, I rackon—mos'ly.

MATT. Well, I was bred in the country, like you. What wages do you get here ? [*He pulls the flask out of his pocket, whistling "Lady, be good."*]

FIRST LABOURER. Waal, ef yu'm the convict, yu'm a cule customer arter that.

MATT. But why on earth should you *think* I'm the convict? I'm just a fisherman staying at Lustleigh. [*He takes a pull at the empty flask*] You're making a fool of yourself, you know.

FIRST LABOURER. [*Scratching his head*] Ef so be as yu'm what yu zay yu be, wot d'you goo vur to 'ide yere?

MATT. Hide? I was having a nap out of the wind, before walking home.

FIRST LABOURER. This joker 'ad a fishin'-rod wi' un, tu.

MATT. The convict? Bosh!

FIRST LABOURER. Not zo much bosh, neither.

MATT. Look you, my man, I've had enough of this. [*He stands up suddenly.*]

The LABOURER *steps back and lifts his shovel. But at this moment the* FARMER *and* SECOND LABOURER *step into the picture from Left, accompanied by a* LITTLE GIRL *of thirteen or so, who has been riding.*

FARMER. Now then, now then! That'll du, Jim. Yu there, on my land, kindly give me yure name, and account for yureself. There's a rough customer about, with a fishin'-rod, same as yu.

MATT. Mr Browning?

FARMER. Ay! that's my name.

MATT. Mine's Matthew. Captain Matthew. I'm staying at the Inn at Lustleigh. There's some very absurd mistake. This good trusty dog thinks he's treed a convict.

FARMER. [*Impressed by* MATT'S *accent and air, and*

the flask in his hand] Well, Sir, when there's these escapes on the moor, we 'ave to be careful. Miss 'Lizabeth, yu run along.

The LITTLE GIRL *does not move, but remains spellbound.*

Constable's just been in wi' nues from Widecombe of the car yonder, and the man that pinched it 'ad a long brown coat, a fishin'-rod, and an 'at like yurn.

MATT. If the constable's here still, you'd better take me to him.

FARMER. No, rackon I'll ask 'im to step over 'ere. George, run and fetch constable, he'm down along by thiccy car.

The SECOND LABOURER *departs, Right, the* FIRST LABOURER *retires a little to the Right, leaving the* FARMER *and* MATT *by themselves on the Left, the* FARMER *being on the outside. The* LITTLE GIRL *still lurks breathless.*

MATT. Now, Mr Browning—dash it all!—you ought to know better than this!

FARMER. Oh! I daresay yu'm a gentleman, but so's this convict, seemin'ly. Leastways he'm a captain. Perhaps yu'll tell me the name o' the inn-keeper where yu'm stayin' at Lustleigh?

MATT. Has he got a name? I hadn't noticed.

FARMER. No; nor the name of the Inn neither, maybe?

MATT. The Red Lion.

FARMER. Ha!

MATT. Well, it ought to be.

FARMER. And per'aps yu'll show me the clothes yu've got on.

MATT. [*Taking a resolution*] Well, I own up.

LITTLE GIRL. Oh!

FARMER. I thowt yu'd come to it.

MATT. [*Lowering his voice*] Be sporting. Give me a show!

FARMER. Now yu know I can't du that; what's the yuse of askin'?

MATT. Well, I've had forty-eight hours' freedom, and given them a good run. You haven't a cigarette?

FARMER. I don't smoke them things. Jim, got a fag for this gentleman?

FIRST LABOURER *brings out a packet of cigarettes which he holds out.* MATT *takes one and lights it from a match sheltered in the horny hands of the* LABOURER, *who then retires again, Right, with the shovel.*

MATT. Thanks very much! [*He sits on the wheelbarrow.*]

There ensues a silence. The LITTLE GIRL *steals up to* MATT.

LITTLE GIRL. [*Holding out a small book*] Would you mind giving me your autograph?

FARMER. Miss 'Lizabeth!

LITTLE GIRL. Well, I've only just begun—I *have* to ask anybody at all thrilling.

MATT. [*With a grin*] Ink or—blood?

LITTLE GIRL. Oh! that'd be splendid!

MATT. Mine or—yours?

LITTLE GIRL. Oh! I've got a fountain pen. [*Hands it.* MATT *writes his name.*] Thank you so much.

MATT. [*Handing back the book*] Shake hands on it.

The LITTLE GIRL *and he shake hands.*

When you're an old woman you'll be able to say you met Murderous Matt.—Mr Browning, you won't give me a chance?

FARMER. Aid and abet a convict? No, no, Captain!

MATT. Vermin, eh? [*Looking round him*] Well, you see, I've gone to earth. D'you hold with digging foxes out?

FARMER. I du, the varmints!

MATT. Ah! Well, you may thank your stars you were never in prison.

FARMER. No, an' I 'ope I'll never du nothin' to putt me there.

MATT. Take care you don't have bad luck, that's all.

FARMER. Bad luck? I rackon a man as kills a man can think he's havin' *gude* luck if he don't swing for it.

MATT. [*Sombrely*] I meant the poor beggar no harm.

LITTLE GIRL. Have you really killed a man?

MATT. Not yet.

FARMER. [*Removing the pick from the barrow*] Yu struck the blow, and he died of't. What's more, so far as I remember, he was duin' his duty, same as I'm duin' mine. [*He looks intently at* MATT, *as if warning him not to try another blow.*]

MATT. You needn't be afraid; there's a child here. If there weren't! I hope you'll see that my friend

here [*Pointing to the* LABOURER] has the reward for my capture.

FARMER. 'E can 'ave it; I don' want no reward for duin' *my* duty.

MATT. [*Nodding gravely*] That's lucky! I appreciate your excellent intentions, Mr Browning. Glad to have met you! Good-bye!

He leaps from the barrow, and with a twist like a footballer evading a tackle, is past him and away to the Left. The LITTLE GIRL *claps her hands.*

FARMER. [*Astonished*] The varmint! Hi! Jim! Arter 'im!

The LABOURER *utters a sort of roar and starts running. The* FARMER *is about to follow.*

LITTLE GIRL. Oh! Mr Browning!

FARMER. Well?

LITTLE GIRL. Oh! nothing.

FARMER. Darn!

He follows out, running, Left.

The CONSTABLE *and* SECOND LABOURER *come hurrying from Right.*

CONSTABLE. Gone! Which way, Missy?

LITTLE GIRL. [*With distant blankness*] I don't know.

CONSTABLE. Come on, then!

He and the LABOURER *go out, Left, running.*

LITTLE GIRL. Oh! I do hope he gets off! Oh!

On the hue and cry

The CURTAIN *falls*

EPISODE VIII

A few minutes have passed.

In the parlour of a cottage of gentility are two maiden ladies—Miss Grace, *about forty-seven, brewing tea at a little table before the fire, Right, and* Miss Dora, *much younger, still dressed in hunting togs, standing at the open French window, Back.*

Miss Dora. There's such a glow on the Cleave, Grace. Most lovely red. We killed. Everybody was looking out for that escaped convict.

Miss Grace. Did you see him ?

Miss Dora. No, thank goodness. Poor hunted wretch !

Miss Grace. If you think hunted things are poor, why do you go hunting ?

Miss Dora. Foxes hunt and expect to be hunted.

Miss Grace. So do convicts. Sympathy's wasted on them. Tea, Dora.

Miss Dora. This isn't a common convict. It's that Captain Denant, you remember——

Miss Grace. Oh !—not likely to forget the row we had about his case. Well ! it served him right !

MISS DORA. [*Going to the table and sitting down. Looking steadily at her sister*] For a good woman, Grace, you know—you're awfully hard.

MISS GRACE. Tea-cake, please. I like consistency.

MISS DORA. [*Deeply*] I think you're right.

MISS GRACE. [*Surprised*] How ?

MISS DORA. It *is* a shame to hunt a fox—much better to shoot it.

MISS GRACE. There'd soon be no foxes. Don't get *that* bee into your bonnet *here*. What with rabbits, and chained dogs, you've set the farmers by the ears as it is. Wait till we go to Bath. You can have as many bees as you like there.

MISS DORA. I shan't hunt any more.

MISS GRACE. Then you're very foolish, if you enjoy it. Will you come over to the Service with me this evening ?

MISS DORA. D'you know what I wish *you'd* say, Grace ? "I shan't go to church any more."

MISS GRACE. I wish to God, Dora, you'd give up free thought !

MISS DORA. I wish to God, Grace, you'd give up religion.

MISS GRACE. You only hurt the vicar by it.

MISS DORA. [*Shaking her head*] He's too good a sort to mind.

MISS GRACE. You're too perverse for anything. I've only to say something and you set your will to the opposite.

MISS DORA. My dear, my will is nothing to yours. I haven't the ego for it.

MISS GRACE. [*Coldly*] You mean I'm egoistic? Thank you.

MISS DORA. Sorry, Grace.

MISS GRACE. Will you have another cup?

MISS DORA. Please.

She is holding out her cup and MISS GRACE *has poured from the teapot, when a Figure comes rushing through the French window. They both drop their hands and stare.* MATT, *panting and distressed, makes a sudden revealing gesture of appeal, and blots himself out behind a window curtain. The hue and cry is heard off. The two ladies are still staring in wild surprise, when the* FARMER *appears at the French window.*

FARMER. Which way d' 'e go?

MISS DORA. Who?

FARMER. Convict. Mun cam' over your waal un' round the corner ther'.

MISS DORA. Oh! Yes. I thought I saw. Across the lawn, and over the wall at the far end, Mr Browning. Quick!

Behind her the figure and face of MISS GRACE *are expressive.*

FARMER. Gude! Woi! Over the waal 'e went. To him, boys! Chop him before he'm into the spinney.

The hue and cry passes the window, running —the TWO LABOURERS, *the* CONSTABLE, *and* TWO TOURIST YOUTHS. *The cries die*

off and leave a charged silence—the TWO LADIES *on their feet.*

MATT. [*Emerging, still breathless, with his hat in his hand. Noting* MISS DORA'S *riding kit, he turns to* MISS GRACE] Thank you, Madam.

MISS GRACE. Not me.

MATT. [*Making a bow to* MISS DORA] That was great of you, great!

MISS DORA. Keep back—one of them might see. [*She draws the curtains as* MATT *shrinks back.*]

MISS GRACE. Great! To tell such a lie! And for a convict!

MATT. [*Recovering his self-possession*] If you'll forgive my saying so, that makes it greater. To tell a lie for an archbishop wouldn't strain one a bit.

MISS GRACE. Please don't blaspheme.

MISS DORA. [*Pouring out tea*] Will you have a cup of tea, Sir?

MISS GRACE. [*In a low voice*] Really, Dora!

MATT. [*Dropping his hat and taking the cup from* MISS DORA] It's too good of you. [*He drinks it straight off and hands it back*] I'm most awfully sorry for butting in like this; but it was neck or nothing.

MISS GRACE. Then I think it should have been nothing, Sir, considering the position you've placed my poor sister in.

MISS DORA. [*Hotly*] *Poor* sister! Grace, you——!

MATT. When you're hunted all you think of is the next move.

MISS DORA. I'm afraid you're awfully done.

MATT. Thanks, I'm getting my wind back. I feel like kissing the hem of your garment.

MISS DORA. It hasn't got one. Wasn't it rather mad to escape ?

MATT. I don't think so. It's shown me how decent people can be.

MISS DORA. Did they ill-treat you ?

MATT. Oh ! no, the treatment's all right—a trifle monotonous.

MISS DORA. Listen !

[*They listen. Faint shouting.*

Where are you making for ?

MATT. No plan. They're no good. It's like a battle—you change 'em before you use 'em.

MISS DORA. I read who you were in the papers.

MATT. Oh ! yes. I'm in big print ? Thank you most awfully. I'll clear out now.

MISS DORA. No, wait ! [*At the curtains*] I'll be back in a minute. *She slips out.*

MISS GRACE. [*Turning round to him*] I suppose you call yourself a gentleman ?

MATT. I really don't know. Depends on who I'm with. I might be contradicted.

MISS GRACE. You see the sort of woman my sister is—impulsive, humanitarian. I'm—I'm very fond of her.

MATT. Naturally. She's splendid.

MISS GRACE. If you don't want to involve her——

MISS DORA. [*Reappearing through the curtains*] I think I can hide you.

MISS GRACE. Dora !

MATT. No, no! It's not good enough. I can't let you—

MISS DORA. [*Turning on her sister*] I'm going to, Grace. [*They speak together in rapid tones.*]

MISS GRACE. Not in this house.

MISS DORA. It's as much my house as yours. You need have nothing to do with it.

MISS GRACE. [*Drawing her from the window*] At least you haven't broken the law yet. And you're not going to now.

MISS DORA. I can't bear to see a soldier and a gentleman chased by a lot of chawbacons.

MISS GRACE. [*With a glance at* MATT] Dora, you mustn't. It's wrong and it's absurd.

MISS DORA. [*Heated*] Go upstairs. If I have to refer to you, I'll say you've seen nothing. And so can you.

MISS GRACE. [*Her voice rising*] You expect *me* to tell lies!

MATT, *unseen in the heat of this discussion, makes a motion of despair and slips out of the window.*

MISS DORA. I'm going to hide him, I tell you. Captain—[*Suddenly turning to* MATT, *she sees that he is no longer there*] Where is he?

The TWO SISTERS *stand silent, blankly gazing about them.*

MISS DORA. Did he go by the door or the window?

MISS GRACE. I don't know.

MISS DORA. Didn't you see him?

MISS GRACE. I did not. [*At the expression on her sister's face*] I say I did not.

MISS DORA looks behind the window curtain, then cautiously out of the window, then recoils before the CONSTABLE, *who comes in heated and breathless, followed by the* FARMER *and the* FIRST LABOURER, *who stops outside.*

CONSTABLE. Beg pardon, Miss. We've lost un. He'm a fair twister. Maybe he doubled back. We'll 'ave a luke over, if an' in case he'm hidin' yere somewhere about. Can we go thru yere ?

MISS DORA. He can't be in the house.

MISS GRACE stands pursing her lips.

FARMER. We med 'ave a luke, Miss, after that. 'E'm a proper varmint.

Without waiting for further permission, the two pass through the room and go out, Left. The TWO SISTERS *stand looking at each other.*

MISS DORA. I won't have him caught ! [*She moves towards the door.*]

MISS GRACE. [*Seizing her sister's skirt*] Stop ! I tell you !

MISS DORA. Let go !

MISS GRACE. I shall not. You're crazy. What is it to you ?

MISS DORA. Let go, Grace !

MISS GRACE. You can't help him without breaking the law.

MISS DORA. Will you let me go, Grace ? I shall hit you.

MISS GRACE. Very well. Hit me, then!

The TWO SISTERS *clinch, and for a moment it looks as if there were to be a physical struggle between them. There are sounds of approach.*

MISS DORA. Let go!

They unclinch, and wait for the door to open. Re-enter the FARMER *and* CONSTABLE.

FARMER. Well, he'm not yere; that's certain for zure.

CONSTABLE. [*Between the two*] You're quite sure, Miss, yu saw 'im over that wall?

A tense moment.

MISS DORA. Quite!

MISS GRACE *has drawn her breath in with a hiss.*

FARMER. And not seen un since?

MISS DORA. No.

FARMER. Nor yu, Miss?

MISS DORA *stares at her sister.*

MISS GRACE. [*Throwing up her head, and with a face like a mask*] No.

FARMER. [*Picking up* MATT'S *hat, left by him as he fled*] 'Ere, what's this?

MISS DORA. [*Recovering*] That? An old hat of my brother's that I use sometimes.

FARMER. 'Tis uncommon like the one that varmint was wearin'.

MISS DORA. Is it? Those fishing hats are all the same. [*Taking the hat*] Have you tried the orchard, Mr Browning?

FARMER. Ah! we mun try that, but 'tis gettin' powerful dimsy. Come, boys, we mun 'ave a gude old luke. The varmint fuled me bravely. I mun get me own back.

MISS DORA. Try the vicarage!

CONSTABLE. Ah! we'll try that tu.

They pass out at the window.

The TWO SISTERS *are left silent.* MISS GRACE *suddenly sits down at the table and covers her face with her hand.*

MISS DORA. You told it beautifully, Grace. Thank you!

MISS GRACE. [*Uncovering her face with a fierce gesture*] Thank me for telling a lie!

MISS DORA. I'm sorry.

MISS GRACE. Sorry? You'd make me do it again!

MISS DORA. [*Simply*] I would. [*Looking after the hunt*] Poor fellow!

On the look between them

The CURTAIN *falls*

EPISODE IX

No time has passed. In the vestry of a village church lighted by an oil lamp, where, at the back, surplices and cassocks are hanging on pegs, a door, Right, leads to the churchyard and an open door, Left, into the church. There is no furniture except a chair or two, and a small table with a jug on it against the wall "up" from the door, Left.

The stage is empty, but almost at once the PARSON *enters from the church, carrying some overpast Harvest decorations, which he places on the table. He is a slim, grizzle-haired, brown, active, middle-aged man with a good, lined, clean-shaven face, and a black Norfolk jacket; obviously a little "High" in his doctrine. He pours water from a jug into two large vases, humming: "O for the wings—for the wings of a dove!" Then carrying the vases, one in each hand, he goes back into the church. The door on the Right is opened and the hunted, hatless* MATT *slips in, closing the door behind him. He stands taking in the situation, crosses to the open door opposite, spies the* PARSON, *and, recoiling, blots*

himself out behind a cassock. His face, peeping out, is withdrawn as the PARSON *returns, this time literally singing: "O for the wings—for the wings of a dove!" Taking off his coat, he prepares to hang it on a peg and take a cassock, and as he reaches the highest note, he lifts the cassock from in front of* MATT *and starts back.*

PARSON. Hullo!

MATT. Sanctuary, Sir!

PARSON. What d'you mean? Who are you?

MATT *opens his Burberry.*

Oh! [*That "Oh!" is something more than astonishment; it has in it an accent of dismay, as if the speaker were confronted by his own soul*] The escaped convict! You oughtn't to have come in here.

MATT. Then where, Sir? In old days the Church——

PARSON. In old days the Church was a thing apart; now it belongs to the State.

MATT *makes a move towards the door.*

Wait a minute! [*He has hung up his coat and put on the cassock, as if to strengthen the priest within him*] I think I read that you were that Captain Denant who——

MATT. Yes.

PARSON. [*Almost to himself*] Poor fellow!

MATT *stares at him and there is a silence.*

MATT. Death isn't as much to us who were in the war, as it is to you.

PARSON. I know; I was there.

MATT. Padre?

PARSON. [*Nodding*] Where have you come from?

MATT. House of the two ladies over there. Left them fighting over me. Couldn't stand that—not worth it.

PARSON. [*With a little smile*] Yes, Miss Dora wanted to keep you and Miss Grace to throw you out. H'm? And yet Miss Dora doesn't come to church, and Miss Grace does. Something wrong there; or is it something right? [*He stares at* MATT] Are they after you?

MATT. Full cry.

PARSON. Sanctuary? If I were a Roman. Sometimes wish I were.

MATT. More logical.

PARSON. More powerful. This is a situation I've never had to face, Captain Denant.

MATT. Well, Sir, I'm just about done. If you could let me rest a bit, that's all I ask.

PARSON. My dear fellow! Sit down! [*He pulls a chair forward*] I'll lock the door. [*He does so; then, as* MATT *looks up at the window, which is in the fourth wall*] No, they can't see in. I expect you're very hungry too.

MATT. [*Sitting*] No, thanks—beyond it. You know that feeling, I bet?

PARSON. [*Shaking his head*] I'm afraid we of the Church lead too regular lives.

MATT. Not at the Front? It was pretty rife *there.*

PARSON. No, I'm ashamed to say—not even there. [*While speaking, he is evidently pondering and torn.*]

MATT. [*Suddenly*] Well, Padre, how does it look to you ? Giving me up ?

PARSON. [*Moved*] Padre ! [*He takes a turn and comes to a sudden halt in front of* MATT'S *chair*] As man to man—who am I to give you up ? One poor fellow to another ! [*Shaking his head*] I can't help you to escape, but if you want rest, take it.

MATT. [*Suddenly*] Wonder what Christ would have done !

PARSON. [*Gravely*] That, Captain Denant, is the hardest question in the world. Nobody ever knows. You may answer this or that, but nobody ever knows. The more you read those writings, the more you realise that He was incalculable. You see—He was a genius ! It makes it hard for us who try to follow Him. [*Gazing at* MATT, *who is sitting forward with his elbows on his knees and his head on his hands*] Very tired ?

MATT. Gosh ! I didn't think one could feel so tired. My joints have gone on strike. I was a three-mile runner, too.

PARSON. Were you ? Good man !

MATT. It's the strain here. [*Touching his head*] If they get me and I have to go back ! Odd ! I didn't feel it half as much when I was escaping from Germany.

PARSON. Did anyone see you come in here ?

MATT. Can't have—they'd have been in on my heels.

PARSON. Who's after you ?

MATT. Villagers—and a constable.

PARSON. My villagers—and here am I——

MATT. [*Standing up*] By George, yes, Padre ! It's too bad. I'll clear out.

PARSON. [*Putting his hand on his shoulder and pressing him back into the chair*] No, no ! Rest while you can. You've asked for sanctuary. I don't know that I've the right to turn you out of here. I don't know—anyway I can't. Take your time. I have a little brandy here. Sometimes we get a faint in church—[*He takes a bottle and a little glass from the corner cupboard*] Drink it down.

MATT. [*Drinking it off. Pulling out the flask*] I say—I wonder if you'd return *this* for me ; it's empty —to that name and address. [*He takes a tailor-sewn label out of his pocket*] I ripped it off this Burberry. You might say " with unending gratitude." But please don't give that name away.

PARSON. No, no ; I'll see to it. [*Pockets it*] Tell me ! What made you escape ?

MATT. Stick a bob-cat in a cage and open the door by mistake ; and see what happens. [*Looking at the* PARSON'S *face*] Oh ! Yes, I know what you mean— but I've paid my scot long ago.

PARSON. Didn't you have a fair trial ?

MATT. You can't " try " bad luck.

PARSON. All bad luck ?

MATT. Well, I oughtn't to have hit him, of course ; original sin, you know ; but for an ordinary knock-out six weeks is about all you'd get ; and I got four

years more for that Rotten Row rail. Yes, I think I was perfectly entitled to have a shot.

PARSON. If you're quiet in your own mind—that's the only thing.

MATT. Well, you needn't worry, Padre. I shall be caught all right.

PARSON. [*With a smile*] I'm not worrying about that. Cæsar can look after himself, he has the habit. What bothers me is my own peace of mind. I don't like the thoughts that keep rising in it. You led a company in the war. And I lead——

MATT. Your parishioners—um ?

PARSON. Yes. [*Nodding*] When you're gone—shall I be entitled to have been silent about you without telling *them* that I have been silent ? Am I entitled to refrain from helping the Law without letting *them* know it ? If I let them know it, can I keep what little influence I now possess ? And is it right for a parson to go on where he has no influence ? That's my trouble, Captain Denant.

MATT. I see. [*With a start*] Some one's trying the door.

The PARSON *moves to the door, Right ;* MATT *has started forward.*

PARSON. [*At the door*] Who is that ?

VOICE OF BELLRINGER. Me, Zurr.

PARSON. No, Thomas, I'm busy ; I can't let anyone into the church now till Service time. [*He stands listening, then returns, Centre*] My bellringer.

MATT. [*In a low voice*] The hospitality of God—I shan't forget, Padre. But I don't want to be on your

conscience. I'll flit. Wish I had the wings of that dove, though!

PARSON. I have Service at half-past six. There will only be one or two gathered together, I'm afraid. Make a third. You can rest through the Service. No one comes in here.

MATT. You're a trump! But I'd rather go and take my chance again. It's dark now. I don't like to give in. I'll bolt, and be caught in the open. You might give me your blessing.

PARSON. [*Shaking his head*] Not certain enough of myself—not certain enough. It takes a bishop at least to give a blessing.

A very loud knocking on the door.

MATT. Trapped, by George! [*He springs towards the cassocks and blots himself out.*]

The PARSON *has gone again to the door.*

PARSON. [*Rather sharply*] What is that?

VOICE OF CONSTABLE. Open the door, Zurr, please!

PARSON. Who is it?

VOICE OF CONSTABLE. Constable, Zurr; open, please.

The PARSON, *with a gesture of distress, opens the door. Enter the* CONSTABLE, *the* FARMER, *the* TWO LABOURERS, *and the* BELLRINGER.

PARSON. I told you, Thomas, I could see no one till after Service.

BELLRINGER. Yes, Zurr; but Constable 'e thought you ought to know as 'ow I zeed a man enter 'ere a while back. [*He looks round.*]

PARSON. What's all this, Constable?

CONSTABLE. 'Tis th' escaped convict, Zurr. We'm after 'e. These tu men yere found 'e down to the old gravel-pit. 'E give 'em the slip, an' we chased un to the ladies' 'ouse yonder, wherr 'e gave us the goo-by again; and Tammas says 'e saw a man come in 'ere as sounds praaperly like the varmint. You ben 'ere long, Zurr?

PARSON. An hour, at least.

CONSTABLE. Front door's locked, but I got men in the porch. Be 'ee sure as there's no one in the church?

PARSON. [*Moving towards the church door*] I don't know whether you have the right to search a holy place; but look for yourselves, as quietly as you can, please. [*He stands at the church door to let them pass.*]

They go, with the exception of the BELLRINGER, *who has remained by the vestry door. The* PARSON *crosses to him.*

You can go too, Thomas. I'll stand here.

The BELLRINGER, *with uneasy eyes and motions, crosses under the compulsion of the* PARSON'S *glance.*

PARSON. [*Hardly moving his lips*] Now, quick!

But as he speaks, the FARMER *reappears in the church doorway; the* PARSON *has just time to make a warning gesture,* MATT *just time to blot himself out again.*

PARSON. Well, Browning?

FARMER. 'Eem not therr; 'tes zo bare's me 'and.

'Eem a proper twisty customer for sure, but we'll get 'e yet. [*His eyes rest suspiciously on the* PARSON'S *face.*]

PARSON. [*With a forced smile*] He got away from you, then, did he ?

FARMER. Aye ! 'E can run an' twist like a rabbit. He'm a desperate foxy chap. What's behind they cassocks ?

PARSON. [*Still with that forced smile*] I'll look, Browning.

He moves to the cassocks, and, from the middle, takes a look behind them, but to the Left only. And at this moment they all return from the church and he turns to them.

CONSTABLE. Thank 'ee, Zurr; 'e'm not yere, Tammas. Yu made a fule of us zeemin'ly.

BELLRINGER. [*Stammering*] I zeed mun come in 'ere ; I zeed mun wi' these eyes—I did zurely.

PARSON. [*Looking at his watch*] Service, Thomas. Go and ring the bell. [*To the* CONSTABLE] I'm afraid I must ask you to go too, please, unless you would all like to stay for Service.

A certain length of face becomes apparent.

CONSTABLE. [*Opening the door and beckoning the* MEN *out*] My juty, Zurr, ef yu'll excuse us.

PARSON. That's all right, Constable.

FARMER. [*Suddenly*] Jest a minute, Vicar. Yu'll pardon me askin', but are yo zartun zure as yu'm not zeen this joker ?

PARSON. [*Drawing himself up*] What is it you are asking me ?

FARMER. I'm askin' yu on yure honour as a Christian gentleman, whether or no yu've zeen the escaped convict ?

[*After a moment's intense silence.*

PARSON. I——

MATT. [*Stepping out without the Burberry*] Certainly he's not. Sorry, Sir, I was hidden there. [*Holding up his hands*] I surrender, Constable.

FARMER. Woi ! The varmint ! Got un ! Worry, worry, worry !

PARSON. Be quiet in this place ; and go out—You shame God !

Astonished at this outburst, they slink out, leaving MATT, *Centre, in the grip of the* CONSTABLE. *The* PARSON *is on his Left.*

MATT. [*To the* PARSON] Forgive me, Sir ! Oughtn't to have come in here. It wasn't playing cricket.

PARSON. No, no ! That you *have* done—that you *have* done.

MATT. It's one's decent *self* one can't escape.

PARSON. Ah ! that's it ! [*Very low*] God keep you !

He watches the CONSTABLE *and* MATT *go out. The bell begins to ring, as*

The CURTAIN *falls*

END

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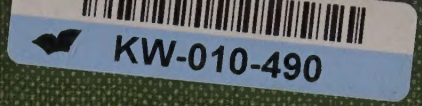
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